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ABSTRACT

Data on a sample of 98 Lebanese secondary schools--representative of the country's urban, rural, public, private, Moslem, and Christian schools--were used to test F. E. Fiedler's hypothesis that school effectiveness is related to the match between the principal's style and his or her school's "situational favorableness." School effectiveness was measured by teacher job satisfaction and by student scores on three sets of national tests. Principal style was defined as the principal's orientation toward relationships or toward task accomplishment. Situational favorableness comprised the principal's authority or power position, school leader-member relations, and the structure of school tasks. Data on these factors were gathered from surveys of 98 principals and 728 teachers and from test scores on 2,999 students. Statistical analysis using regressions, correlations, and t-tests failed to support Fiedler's hypothesis but did indicate, among other things, that good leader-member relations and strong principal power position correlated highly with teacher satisfaction and high scores on one of the national tests. (RW)

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The Mediating Role of Principals' Situational Favorableness on School Effectiveness in Lebanon

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Abstract

This ex post facto field study conducted in Lebanese Secondary Schools, utilized Fiedler's Contingency Theory to validate its match logic. This logic postulates that school effectiveness is contingent on the adequate match between the principal's style and situational favorableness. Population sample consisted of 98 principals, 728 teachers, and 2999 students. The study focused on investigating the extent to which relationship or task oriented principals' situational favorableness influences teachers' satisfaction and students' achievement. Findings contradicted the Contingency Theory: style/situational favorableness match did not conform with Fiedler's. Few significant predictive relationships were shown between situational favorableness and teachers' satisfaction and students' achievement.

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Findings on the role of situational variables in causing or influencing leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes are extensive (eg. Haythorn, Couch, Haefner, Langham & Carter, 1956, Likert, 1961, Fiedler, 1967, Schneider & Bartlette, 1968, Campbell, Dumette & Lawler, 1970, Argyris, 1971, Vroom & Yetton, 1973, Stodgill, 1974, Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Research questions in these and in other studies focused on whether or not a favorable situation or climate is conducive of organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Until the mid sixties, a predominant view was that the more favorable the organizational situation is for the leader, the more effective the leader is (Likert, 1961). A serious challenge to this view was presented by Fiedler (1967) whose contingency theory postulates that group effectiveness is contingent on how adequately the leader's situational control variables are matched with the same leader's basic motivational system or style. Here, the focus of attention is on the match logic rather than on the favorableness of the situation.

The contingency theory (Fiedler, 1967) was tested in schools and other types of organizations (eg. Hunt, 1967, Graham, 1968, Hill, 1969, Reilly, 1969, O'Brien, 1969, Hardy, 1971, Chemers & Skrzypek, 1972, McMahon, 1972, Hardy, Sack & Herpine, 1973, Vroom, 1976, Rice, 1978, Papanicolaou, 1979, Rizvi, 1979, Al-Hadbai, 1981 and Theodory, 1981; 1981; 1981; 1982). The Theory received mixed evaluations ranging from strong support to complete rejection, hence implying the need for further research.

The Purpose

This study investigated the extent to which Lebanese secondary school principals' situational control (SC) favorableness can predictively influence teachers' satisfaction and students' achievement in a manner which conforms with the contingency logic. According to Fiedler (1967), a principal's style is classified as either a high LPC (Least Preferred Co-worker) or a low LPC. A high LPC principal is primarily motivated to seek relatedness with the faculty while a low LPC principal is primarily motivated to achieve the school's tasks. Fiedler (1967) asserted that an effective high LPC principal is one whose SC is moderately favorable while a low LPC is one whose SC is either favorable or unfavorable. Most principals with one or more years of administrative experience enjoy either a favorable or moderately favorable SC (Fiedler, 1971).

Situational Control

Fiedler (1967) delineated SC as consisting of: 1. The Leader-Member Relations (LMR); it indicates the work group's degree of acceptance, loyalty and support held by the workers for the principal. 2. The Task Structure (TS); it indicates the extent to which the school task is structured and conforms with written rules and regulations. 3. Position Power (PP); it is best exemplified by the degree of authority vested in the principal's position to exercise punishment and rewards.

The LMR is the most important SC element followed by TS and PP. This is because the principal who succeeds to win the group's acceptance and unquestioned loyalty needs no ranks or organizational power to get both teachers and staff to carry out the school task. Fiedlers' (1967) findings indicated that in many cases loyal employees work with

their leader even when it is against the interests of the organization.

A favorable SC is when LMR is good, TS is structured, semi-structured or unstructured and PP is strong or weak. A moderately favorable SC is when LMR fluctuates between good and moderately good; TS between structured and unstructured; and PP between strong and weak. An unfavorable SC implies poor LMR, an unstructured TS and either a strong or weak PP.

Hypotheses

Based on the problem and purpose stated above, it was hypothesized that:

H_1: There are significant predictive relationships between LMR, TS, PP and Teachers' Satisfaction and Students' Achievement scores in high and low LPC schools.

H_2: There are significant positive correlation coefficients between Teachers' Satisfaction and Students' Achievement scores in high and low LPC schools.

H_3: There are significant differences among Teachers' Satisfaction scores in favorable, moderately favorable and unfavorable control situations in high and low LPC schools and between these schools.

H_4: There are significant differences among Students' Achievement scores in favorable, moderately favorable and unfavorable control situations in high and low LPC schools and between these schools.

METHOD

Design

In an ex post facto field study, 98 secondary schools were selected from a target school population of n = 122. The school sample was representative of all geographical regions in Lebanon (rural and urban) types of schools (public and private) and religious denominations (Moslem and Christian).

Population

The population sample included 98 principals, all teachers of the Third Secondary class (n = 728) which is equivalent to Freshman in American Colleges, and all Third Secondary class students(n = 2999) who were enrolled in the same school for two or more years. Principals and teachers have all served for two or more years in the same school.

Instruments

Principals

An Arabic version of Fiedler's (1977) LPC and SC instruments were administered to all principals. The LPC, an eighteen bipolar semantic differential, identified high (a score of 64 or more) and low (a score of 57 or less) LPC principals. Test re-test reliability for LPC, $r = .48$, $P \leqslant .001$.

LMR, an eight 5-point Likert scale, measured the principal's perceptions of the extent to which faculty/staff provided him or her with support. Scores above 30, 20-30 and below 20 indicated respectively good, moderately good and poor LMR. The test re-test reliability (eight weeks later), $r = .68$, $p \leqslant .001$. TS, a ten 3-point Likert scale, measured the extent to which the school's task adopts and conforms with rules and regulations. Scores 14 and above, 7-13 and 6 or below indicated respectively a structured, semi-structured

and unstructured TS. Test re-test reliability, r = .68, $p \leq .001$. pp, a five-item multiple choice questionnaire, measured the extent to which the principal was authorized to punish or reward faculty and staff. Scores of 7-10, 4-6 and 3 or below indicated respectively a strong, weak/strong and weak pp. Test re-test reliability, r = .47, $p \leq .001$.

A favorable SC score is 50-70, moderately favorable 29-49 and unfavorable 8-28.

Teachers

An Arabic version of Smith's (copyright, 1975) Job Description Index (IDI) was administered to all teachers to assess the level of Teachers' Satisfaction. JDI consisted of five parts: Work, Pay, Promotion, Supervision and Co-workers. Questionnaires on Work, Supervision and Co-workers were each made of 18 items. Questionnaires on Promotion and Pay were each made of 9 items. JDI asked teachers to describe their level of satisfaction with regard to all five parts. The direct scoring method was used and mean scores were computed for each school in the sample. Scores 0-23, 24-47 and 48-72 indicated respectively low, medium and high teachers' satisfaction.

Students

Students' achievement was evaluated in 1. Foreign Languages and Literature (English or French) 2. Arabic Philosophy, 3. Mathematics, 4. Natural Sciences and 5. Social Sciences. Students' achievement scores were received from three different sources:

1. The school-Cumulative School Achievement (CSA) mean scores in the Third Secondary class.
2. The Government - Public National Examination (PNE) mean scores; a required national examination of all graduating Third Secondary class students, and

3. An external examining committee - External Achievement Test (EAT), administered on a voluntary basis. EAT covered all subject-matter mentioned above and was item analysed for difficulty and discrimination.

Scores on the CSA, PNE and EAT were standardized conforming with schools and governments criteria; a grade of 50 out of 100 was considered passing.

Data Analysis

To investigate the hypotheses, step-wise multiple regression, the Pearson-Moment Correlation Coefficient and the t-test techniques were used in this study.

RESULTS

Preliminary Findings

Principals

Results showed 71 high and 27 low LPC principals (mean LPC score, 93 for high and 44 for low). Forty-two high and 14 low LPC principals had favorable SC; 29 high and 13 low LPC principals, moderately favorable SC; none, unfavorable SC.

Mean LMR, TS, PP scores for high LPC principals with favorable SC were 34, 14 and 9 respectively; with moderately favorable SC, 31,8, and 7 respectively. In low LPC schools with favorable SC, mean LMR, TS, PP scores were 34, 13 and 9 respectively; with moderately favorable SC, 28, 9, and 7 respectively.

Mean LMR scores in high and low LPC schools were 32 and 31 respectively (good LMR); TS mean scores, 11 and 11 respectively (semi-structured); and PP mean scores, 8 and 8 respectively (strong).

Teachers

In high and low LPC schools with favorable SC, teachers' satisfaction was in the low-medium range (17 and 20 respectively); with moderately favorable SC, teachers' satisfaction was low (7 and 9 respectively). Disregarding the SC variable, teachers' satisfaction in high and low LPC schools was low on the whole (12 and 15 respectively).

Students

Reliable CSA, PNE and EAT were only available from 89, 93 and 66 schools respectively (out of 98 total). In high LPC schools with favorable SC, CSA, PNE and EAT mean scores were 59, 36.5 and 32 respectively; with moderately favorable SC, 50, 34 and 24 respectively. In low LPC schools with favorable SC, mean scores for CSA, PNE and EAT were 60, 34 and 37 respectively; with moderately favorable SC, 58, 30 and 25 respectively.

CSA, PNE and EAT mean scores in high LPC schools (disregarding the situational favorableness variable) were 55, 36, and 28 respectively; in low LPC schools, 59, 32 and 30 respectively.

Findings

Testing H_1 showed that in high LPC schools with favorable SC, $F = 7.26$, df, 1:28, $p \leq .02$ between PP and CSA; with moderately favorable SC, $F = 5.97$, df, 1:15 $p \leq .05$ between TS and EAT (Table 1)

Table 1 here

In low LPC schools with favorable SC for LMR and PNE/EAT, $F = 8.27$ and 9.71 respectively, df, 1:15, $p \leq .05$, negative Beta for both; in moderately favorable SC for TS and CSA, $F = 11.54$, df, 1:7, $p \leq .02$, (table 2)

Table 2 here

Eliminating SC, LMR and Teachers' Satisfaction in high LPC schools yielded F = 6.68, df, 1:45, $p \leq .05$; LMR and CSA, F = 7.01, $p \leq .05$; pp and teachers' satisfaction, F = 8.37, $p < .01$; and pp and CSA, F = 7:01, $p \leq .05$. No significant predictive relationships were shown in low LPC schools.

Table 3 here

Testing H_2, r = .56, $p \leq .001$ between Teachers' Satisfaction and CSA in high LPC schools with favorable SC; with moderately favorable SC, most value signs were negative but insignificant. In low LPC schools with favorable SC, Teachers' Satisfaction and CSA/EAT yielded r = .45, $p \leq .08$ and r = .61, $p \leq .07$ respectively; with moderately favorable SC, value signs were again reversed with r = -.40, $p \leq .08$ between Teachers' Satisfaction and PNE

Table 4 here

Eliminating the SC variable yielded r = .45, $p < .001$ between Teachers' Satisfaction and CSA in high LPC schools; r = .63, $p < .004$ between Teachers' Satisfaction and PNE in low LPC schools.

Table 5 here

Examining H_3 and H_4 yielded no significant differences with the exception of PNE scores in favorable vs moderately favorable SC in high LPC schools ($t \approx -1.46$, $p \leq .10$, one-tailed). The difference was in favor of students in favorable SC.

DISCUSSION

This study was not supportive of Fiedler's contingency match logic as projected by research findings in the West. Findings in this study, however, served as an empirical base for the following observations and implications which are pertinent to Lebanon:

1. In the absence of the confounding situational control variable

(favorable or moderately favorable SC), a good LMR and a strong pp in high LPC schools were positively and significantly predictive of outcomes within the school (Teachers' satisfaction and CSA). This is, perhaps, due to the rewarding and often compromising behavior of the high LPC principal. Such a principal continuously negotiates decisions with teachers and does not hesitate to bend or break the rules if this would serve his or her primary motivational purpose. The impact of such a behavior is readily shown in the positive and significant relationship between Teachers' Satisfaction and Students' CSA scores.

The same could not be said about low LPC principals whose behavior differs significantly from high LPC ones. This difference is manifested in at least two ways: The first, relates to the low LPC principal's insistance on maintaining a formal and distant stature which keeps teachers and students away from daily decisions. The second, relates to the low LPC principal's persistence in conforming with rules and regulations regardless of how this may influence teachers' morale or students' motivation. The implication being, that low LPC principals' perceptions of their relations with teachers (LMR), the structure of the school task (TS) and position power (PP) is a function of the extent to which the work group adheres to the rules and regulations of the school. Here, teachers do not need to inflate school examination grades like their high LPC counterparts do, but rather conform to a rigid approach so as to insure students' success in external examinations. In Lebanon, government (public) or external examination scores are detrimental to students who intend to enrol in higher education institutions; school grades are not.

The dichotomy between high and low LPC principals is, no doubt, a real one. A high LPC principal seeks immediate reinforcement and favorable feedback as shown by students' school grades. The low LPC principal shows little concern for daily feedback and awaits final

results on external examinations to assess the school's effectiveness. Mean achievement scores, however, have shown that effectiveness as measured by outcome was not attained by most high and low LPC principals. Students' achievement scores were not significantly different between high and low LPC schools.

2. When the favorable or moderately favorable situational control variable was introduced into the analysis, the nature and direction of yielded values became different. With a favorable SC, the predictive relationships between LMR and the outcome variables were insignificant in high LPC schools and negatively significant in low LPC schools (PNE and EAT). An obvious implication is that principals' favorable perceptions of the support they receive from teachers is not positively translated into teachers' perceptions of satisfaction nor into students' achievement scores. It is important to remeber, however, that the score on the Teachers' Satisfaction instrument is a measure of how they feel about Work, Promotion, Pay, Supervision and Co-workers. Whether or not the principal is responsible for all these sources of satisfaction is a matter related to the type of the school and its administrative structure. Principals of both private and public schools can recommend promotion and pay raises but the ceiling for the former is far more relaxed than the latter. Thus, it may be assumed that both high and low LPC principals use their position power to negotiate for a better achievement of their goals; the former in achieving relatedness and support and the latter in attaining the task.

Of significance, also, is that Teachers' Satisfaction related positively to students' achievement in favorable control situations and negatively in moderately favorable situations regardless of the style of the principal. While this finding provides support to Likert (1961), it deserves further analysis: Situational control favorableness is a relative measure of the school climate as perceived by the principal. Such a perception, therefore, is a function of the principal's basic need structure and his/her 'feel' of the situation. Hence, it is not clear whether these perceptions describe what the situation actually

is or what the principal desires it to be or both.

3. Findings in this study delineated the mediating role of situational control variables in influencing school outcomes by utilizing the contingency match logic as a base. Clearly, Lebanese principals' perceptions and modes of behavior are distinctly different from their counterparts in the United States and other Western cultures. There is a pressing need to further investigate the leadership phenomenon in non-western cultures. This may require the development and validation of theoretical constructs that are pertinent to these cultures.

TABLE 1

F values between LMR, TS, PP

and Teachers' Satisfaction, CSA, PNE and EAT scores in

high LPC schools with favorable and moderately favorable SC

	Situation Control	Teacher's Satisfaction	CSA	PNE	EAT
LMR	Favorable	1.43	1.64	.53	1.55
	Moderately Favorable	.48	.02	.11	2.55
TS	Favorable	.61	3.16	.40	.05
	Moderately Favorable	.68	3.33	3.38	5.97**
PP	Favorable	4.01	7.26*	3.06	2.45
	Moderately Favorable	.06	1.63	2.45	.39

* $p \leq .025$

** $p < .05$

Table 2

F values between LMR, TS, PP and Teachers' Satisfaction,

CSA, PNE and EAT in

Low LPC schools with favorable and moderately favorable situation control

	Situation Control	Teacher's Satisfaction	CSA	PNE	EAT
LMR	Favorable	2.78	-	8.27*	9.71**
	Moderately Favorable	.20	2.74	.04	.01
TS	Favorable	.29	3.24	.72	-
	Moderately Favorable	.04	11.54*	.34	.01
PP	Favorable	2.61	.92	.27	.11
	Moderately Favorable	.06	2.30	.13	.80

* $p < .025$

** $p < .05$

Table 3

F values between LMR, TS, PP and Teachers' Satisfaction, CSA, PNE and EAT in high and low LPC schools

	LPC	Teacher's Satisfaction	CSA	PNE	EAT
LMR	High	6.68***	7.01 ***	.12	1.21
	Low	.43	.08	1.13	.07
TS	High	.92	2.74	2.20	2.50
	Low	.22	.86	3.45	.42
PP	High	8.37**	7.01**	.55	1.55
	Low	-	.14	2.01	-

* $p < .01$

** $p \leq .02$

*** $p < .05$

Table 4

Correlations coefficients between Teacher's Job Satisfaction scores and students' achievement scores in favorable and moderately favorable SC in high and low LPC schools

	Situation Control	LPC	CSA	PNE	EAT
Teachers' Job Satisfaction	Favorable	High	.56*	.01	-.02
		Low	.45*	.13	.61*
	Moderately Favorable	High	-.04	-.05	.22
		Low	-.37	-.40*	.14

* $p \leq .08$

Table 5

Correlation coefficients between Teacher's Job Satisfaction scores and Students' Achievement scores in high and low LPC schools

	LPC	CSA	PNE	EAT
Teachers' Job Satisfaction	High	.45*	.02	.12
	Low	.26	.07	.63*

* $p < .004$

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